

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8810

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 5648

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: OVIP, BE (FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER VAN ELSLANDE'S VISIT

REF: BRUSSELS 5585

1. SUMMARY. AS SEEN BY THE EMBASSY, OUR THREE BASIC OBJECTIVES IN BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON ARE TO ESTABLISH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SECRETARY AND OTHER TOP US OFFICIALS,

TO INFORM HIM OF US VIEWS ON MAJOR MULTILATERAL ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN (US-EUROPEAN DIALOGUE AND DECLARATIONS OF PRINCIPLES DETENTE, DEFENSE POSTURE AND BURDEN SHARING, RELATIONS WITH AREAS BEYOND THE NORTH ATLANTIC REGION), AND TO ACCORD HIM THE ATTENTION AND THUS THE PRESTIGE THAT HE NEEDS TO FOLLOW SPAAK AND HARMEL IN KEEPING BELGIUM'S COURSE COMPATIBLE WITH US INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EMBASSY HAS ALREADY REPORTED ATTITUDES EMERGING IN IN BELGIUM AND IN EUROPE THAT PRESAGE A MORE DIFFICULT TIME IN MAINTAINING MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS BETWEEN US AND EUROPE. THIS WILL BE TRUE REGARDLESS OF HOW MUCH MOMENTUM WE AND THE PRESENT, FADING GENERATION OF POST-WWII LEADERS IN EUROPE CAN IMPART THE IDEA OF PARTNERSHIP WE SEEK TO ADVANCE. UPON VAN ELSLANDE -- FORMERLY A SPECIALIST IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FIRST FLEMING TO OCCUPY HIS PRESENT OFFICE, AND A MEMBER OF THE FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (CVP) THAT INCLUDES A LEFTIST INTELLECTUAL, QUASI-ECCLESIASTIC WING SET UPON RETURNING BELGIUM TO AN ILL-DEFINED NEUTRALITY -- WILL FALL A MAJOR PORTION OF THE

RESPONSIBILITY FOR STEERING BELGIUM THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE ASSIST AS POSSIBLE IN PREPARING HIM FOR HIS TASKS AND SECURE BETWEEN HIM AND US THAT COMMONALITY OF VIEW AND EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS PREVAILED IN OUR RELATIONS SINCE 1945.

3. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES MAY BE ACHIEVED AS MUCH FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE VISIT UPON VAN ELSLANDE, AND FROM THE PRESTIGE HIS WASHINGTON RECEPTION ACCORDS HIM AMONG HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES, HIS PARTY FELLOWS, AND HIS COUNTRYMEN, AS FROM THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS CONVERSATIONS. FULLEST AND MOST DIRECT EXPOSURE TO OFFICIAL US VIEWS ON MAJOR ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTERESTS TO OUR TWO COUNTRIES WILL, HOWEVER, PROVIDE THE SUBSTANTIVE BASIS WITHOUT WHICH HIS LEADERSHIP WOULD, AT BEST, BE INEFFECTIVE. THESE OBJECTIVES WILL BEST BE SERVED NOT ONLY BY SPECIAL COURTESY AT THE TOP, BUT BY THOROUGH DISCUSSIONS OF FUNDAMENTAL MULTILATERAL POLITICAL, SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC MATTERS WITH OTHER HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND DEFENSE.

4. WE ASSUME THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SECRETARY WILL FOCUS UPON THE US-EUROPEAN DIALOGUE AND THE DECLARATIONS OF PRINCIPLES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RESULTS OF MOST RECENT BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL TALKS IN THAT REGARD. IT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL TO DISCUSS WITH HIM THE PACE AND LIMITS OF EAST-WEST DETENTE AS WE PERCEIVE THEM, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM THAT EXCESSIVE EXPECTATIONS, ESPECIALLY OF YOUNGER GENERATION, POSE FOR WESTERN ALLIANCE. BRUSSELS 5317 DESCRIBED THE PARTICULAR PROBLEMS VAN ELSLANDE HAS IN OWN PARTY, THE CVP, WITH A LEFTIST, PACIFIC WING WHICH IS DETERMINED AT THE SPECIAL CVP CONGRESS OCTOBER 27-28 TO PUSH FOR CHANGES IN PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY STANCE. VAN ELSLANDE WILL BE EXPECTED TO TAKE LEAD IN COUNTERING THEIR EFFORT AND NEEDS ALL THE AMMUNITION HE CAN GET.

5. BUTTRESSING OUR VIEWS ON DETENTE SHOULD BE DISCUSSION OF RELATIVE EAST-WEST MILITARY POSTURES, WESTERN DEFENSE NEEDS, AND APPRECIATION OF MILITARY PROBLEMS ENGENDERED BY DEFENSE
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DEPARTMENT BRIEFINGS, INCLUDING A CALL UPON THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOLLOWED UP WITH TALKS WITH ASD-ISA AND OTHER TOP DEFENSE OFFICIALS, COULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IN VIEW OF BELGIUM'S ROLE AS NATO-SHAPE HOST AND STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. TALKS ON SECURITY PROBLEMS SHOULD ANTICIPATE POSSIBLE BELGIAN CONCERN OVER UNDEMOCRATIC NATURE OF SOME NATO COUNTRIES. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS WOULD, OF COURSE, FOCUS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF OUR SECURITY PROBLEMS INCLUDING BURDEN SHARING. IN LAST REGARD, OCTOBER 9 DINNER WITH CONGRESSMEN SHOULD BE SALUTARY.

6. BEYOND EUROPE, BELGIUM'S TRADITIONAL INTERESTS HAVE LAIN IN THE DIRECTION OF AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, AND US-BELGIAN

COOPERATION THERE HAS BEEN GOOD. INTEREST CONTINUES, AS APPOINTMENTS BEING SOUGHT BY AMBASSADOR LORIDAN INDICATE, BUT WE BELIEVE SPECIAL EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO FOCUS VAN ELSLANDE ON RELATIONSHIP OF EUROPEAN AND NORTH ATLANTIC SITUATION TO GLOBAL POLITICS, ESPECIALLY TO FAR EAST AND JAPAN. SINCE PRIME MINISTER LEBURTON IS PLANNING VISIT TO CHINA LATE THIS YEAR OR EARLY NEXT, DISCUSSION OF OUR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING US AND OTHER WESTERN RELATIONS WITH CHINA WOULD BE TIMELY.

7. WHILE WE HAVE NO ACUTE BILATERAL ISSUES WITH BELGIUM IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER WILL WANT AGAIN TO PRESS US ON DESIRE OF SABENA FOR A SECOND LANDING POINT IN THE UNITED STATES. THE BELGIANS PROPOSE TO REQUEST NEW CONSULTATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT ALTHOUGH U. S. IS NOW OFFERING THEM NO HOPE ON SECOND POINT. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE BELGIANS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT THIS ISSUE, FOR THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES LESS WELL TREATED THAN OTHER ALLIES, SUCH AS NETHERLANDS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, BUT LESS LIKELY, THAT VAN ELSLANDE WILL RAISE THE QUESTION OF BLOCKED BANQUE BELGE FUNDS WHICH WE PROPOSE TO TURN OVER TO THE CHINESE AS PART OF OUR BILATERAL FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT WITH THE PRC. IF THE MATTER IS RAISED, WE SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT RENEW TO VAN ELSLANDE THE SUGGESTION THAT THE BELGIAN COULD TAKE THIS MATTER TO COURT SHOULD THEY DESIRE.

8. IN VIEW OF THE FREQUENCY OF OUR APPROACHES TO BELGIANS ON EC ISSUES, WE WOULD URGE THE SECRETARY TO ENCOURAGE VAN ELSLANDE
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TO SUPPORT WITHIN THE EC CERTAIN OF OUR TRADE OBJECTIVES SUCH AS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARTICLE XXIV:6, SOYBEANS, CITRUS FRUIT, ETC. THIS OCCASION MIGHT ALSO BE USED TO EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR RESTRICTION OF EXPORTS OF U. S. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS DURING THE PAST SUMMER. AT SOME POINT DURING VISIT MENTION MIGHT BE MADE OF DESIRABILITY OF BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SPOKANE EXPOSITION.
STRAUSZ-HUPE

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